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THE NIC-NAC;

OR,

Literary Cabinet.

NO. 158. SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 1826. VOL. IV.

"Praise us as we are tasted;
Allow us as we prove;
Our Head shall go bare
Till Merit crown it!"
SHAKSPEARE.

INTRODUCTION.

[TO diversify the nature of our embellishments, we intend occasionally to give portraits of the principal actors and actresses at the London Theatres, and commence the series with one of Mr. W. Farren, as a frontispiece to our present volume. Some account of his life and professional character will be found annexed to the Preface, and we therefore refrain from entering upon those subjects in this place. The beauty of the engraving or the excellence of the likeness it is needless to mention, since it must be apparent to every subscriber that the value of the print is equal at least to six times the price of the number which contains it.]

BEARDS.

VARIOUS are the customs and ceremonies of different nations with regard to the beard. A considerable part of the religion of the Tartars consists in the management of their beards; and they once waged a long and bloody war with the Persians, and declared them infidels, merely because they would not cut their whiskers after the mode or rite of the Tartars. A Spartan, being once asked why he wore so long a beard, replied "Since it is grown white, it incessantly reminds me not to dishonour my old age!" Nevertheless, in Sparta there was a law to make the people shave the upper lip. The Egyptian priests shaved the head, chin, and the whole body. The Assyrians had long beards; the kings of Persia had their beards woven or matted together with gold thread; likewise the first kings of France. Alexander

made the Macedonians shave, lest the length of their beards should give a handle to their enemies. The Greek philosophers distinguished themselves from the vulgar by their long beards. Persius used to call Socrates "Magistrum barbatum." The Romans, for a long time, wore beards and long hair; they did not begin to shave till the year of Rome 454, when P. Sicinius brought over a number of barbers from Sicily, and Scipio Africanus was the first who introduced the mode of shaving every day—to whose memory the cutlers of Sheffield ought to erect a statue of fine wrought steel. An Englishman little thinks that every year he makes 43,800 strokes with the razor across his chin, for no man in shaving can make less than 120. In time of grief and affliction, the Romans suffered their beards and hair to grow. The Greeks,

on the contrary, in time of grief, cut their hair and shaved their beards. The first fourteen Roman emperors shaved till the time of the emperor Adrian, who retained the mode of wearing the beard. Plutarch says, he did it to hide the scars in his face. The Ancient Britons, in the time of Cæsar, shaved the rest of the body except the head and upper lip. Tacitus says the ancient Germans shaved the beard, except that on the upper lip; and among the Catti, a nation of Germany, a young man was not allowed to shave or cut his hair, till he had slain an enemy. Among the Jews, it was reckoned ignominious to shave a person's beard. It is not easy to fix with precision the time when beards were first shaven amongst the young Romans; the first growth was consecrated to some God—usually to the Lares. Nero consecrated his, in a golden box set with pearls, to Jupiter Capitolinus. Slaves wore their hair and beard long, but when manumitted, they shaved the head in the Temple of Feronia, and put on a cap, or "Pileus," as a badge of liberty. The Chinese affect long beards extravagantly; but nature has baulked them, and only given them very little ones, which they cultivate with great care; the Europeans are greatly envied by them on this account. The Russians wore their beards till within these few years, when the Czar Peter enjoined them to shave, but was obliged to keep on foot a number of officers, to cut off by violence the beards of such as would not otherwise part with them. At last he laid a tax on long beards, which might be put into effect in this country upon whiskers and mustachios. A beard was held in high estimation in Russia in early times, for it is a law, in the Novgorodian Code, that whoever plucks hair from another's beard shall be mulcted four times as much as for cutting off a finger. Upon the death of Henry IV. of France, who was succeeded by a beardless youth, the beard was proscribed. Louis XIII. ascended the throne of his glorious

ancestor without a beard, and his courtiers immediately reduced their beards to whiskers, and a small tuft of hair under the lower lip. The Duke of Sully, however, though he encountered ridicule, would never adopt this effeminate custom. In the reign of Catherine, Queen of Portugal, when the brave John De Castro had taken the Castle of Diu, in India, he was under the necessity of borrowing from the inhabitants of Goa a thousand pistoles for the support of his fleet; and as a security for the loan, he sent them one of his whiskers, telling them "all the gold in the world cannot equal the value of this national ornament of my valour, and I deposit it in your hands as a security for the money." Such was the high estimation in which whiskers were then held. The Arabs make the preservation of the beard a capital article of their religion, because Mahomet never cut his. The Moors of Africa hold by their beards while they swear, in order to give validity to their oath, which, after this formality, they rarely violate. The Turkish wives kiss their husbands' beards, and children their fathers', as often as they come to salute them. The Mahometans wear long hair, proceeding from a patch upon the head, about the size of a crown-piece, by which Mahomet pulls them up into Heaven, it is supposed. It is the practice with the North American Indians to pluck out the beard by their roots from its earliest appearance, and hence their faces appear smooth. This fact is confirmed by Capt. Brent and others.—So much for beards! Now for the operators thereon. There were no barbers at Rome before the year A. U. C. 454. Sicinus Mena brought them thither from Sicily. The barbers' shops soon became the resort of idlers and gossips. To this purpose, Horace, in expressing what was public and notorious, says, "that all the barbers knew it!" The ancient barbers also trimmed the nails.—Formerly a lute or viol was part of the furniture of a barber's shop, which was then fre-

quented by persons above the ordinary rank, who resorted thither for the cure of wounds, or, as it was called, to be "trimmed,"—a word which signified either shaving or cutting, and curling the hair. The musical instruments in their shops were for the amusement of waiting customers, and answered the end of a newspaper. Some have supposed the "barber's pole" to have been derived from the pole or head; but the true intention was to show that the master practised surgery, and could breathe a vein as well as take off the beard. The present fraternity of barbers are well known for their ready wit, and

"We have only to walk in their shops
and see

What witty and merry fellows the
Shavers be."

